AL.2.1997-81 c2

Meeting the Challenge III

Three-Year Business Plan for Education

1996/97 - 1998/99

Alberta
EDUCATION

ALBERTA EDUCATION CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA

Alberta. Alberta Education.
Meeting the challenge III: three-year business plan for education,
1996/97 - 1998/99.

ISBN 0-7732-1827-0

1. Educational planning — Alberta. 2. Education and state — Alberta.
3. Education — Alberta — Finance. 4. Educational accountability — Alberta.
5. Education — Alberta — Aims and objectives. I. Title.

LC91.2.A3.A333 1995 379.1

For more information on Meeting the Challenge III, please contact:

Communications Branch
Alberta Education
11160 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 0L2
Phone: (403) 427-2285
Fax: (403) 427-0591

Policy and Planning Branch
Alberta Education
11160 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 0L2
Phone: (403) 427-8217
Fax: (403) 422-5255

The business plan overview and this document are available on the Internet at Alberta Education's home page (http://ednet.edc.gov.ab.ca).

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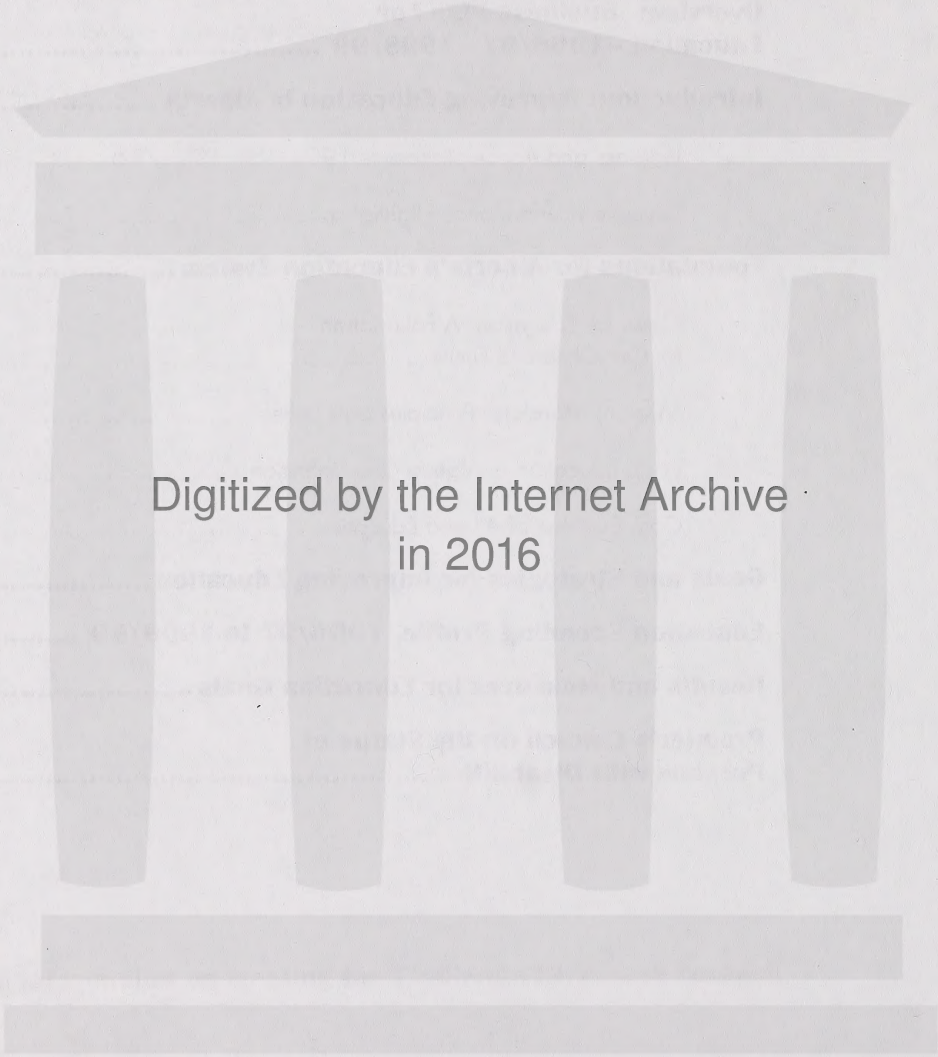

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Message from the Minister

I am pleased to release *Meeting the Challenge III: Three-Year Business Plan for Education, 1996/97 - 1998/99*. It builds on our many accomplishments over the past two years and reflects government's continued strong commitment to basic education.

The past two years have seen major changes to our education system as we have streamlined administration, focused resources on instruction and ensured that all students, no matter where they live in the province, have access to a quality basic education and a fair share of our education resources.

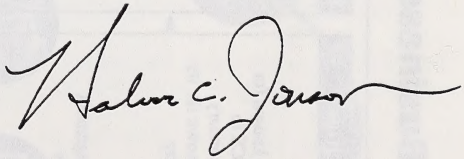
Everyone involved in education met the challenges - fiscal, structural and educational - that faced the province and the education system. We have enhanced our capacity to provide our students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes they require to succeed in the twenty-first century. We have provided for meaningful involvement of parents and the larger community in education decision making. These improvements were made with reduced resources and tremendous effort on the part of many dedicated people throughout the education system.

Our education system is more accountable and our results are impressive. Students are performing well, and parents and students are satisfied with the quality of education.

Alberta's education system has turned the corner. The reductions are behind us. Education will reap the benefits of the province's fiscal restraint policies that have eliminated Alberta's deficit, reduced the debt and allowed government to identify funding for reinvestment priorities. For the first time since 1993/94, funding for education will increase.

We can look forward to greater stability as we complete and fine tune the restructuring. More than ever we will be able to focus on doing what's best for the young people of Alberta. I am eager to continue to work with all partners to make our excellent education system even better.

Sincerely,



Halvar C. Jonson
Minister of Education

Overview: Business Plan For Education - 1996/97 - 1998/99

Government Priorities

- **People**
  - An education system known for its high standards - ECS to grade 12 and post-secondary
  - Health care system known for its quality and accessibility
- **Prosperity**
  - Strong financial management
  - Jobs and the economy
- **Preservation**
  - Supporting individuals, families and communities to deal with change
  - Strong Alberta in a strong Canada

Challenges

- increasing public demand for accountability
- increasing public expectations for education
- coordinating services for children
- changing the governance and delivery of education
- providing equitable educational opportunities for students
- harnessing technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of education
- smaller, simpler government
- continuous improvement

Goals

1. Focus education on what students need to know; ensure that high standards are established, communicated and achieved
2. Provide parents with greater opportunity to select schools and programs of their choice and enable greater parent/ community involvement in education
3. Improve the coordination of services for special needs children
4. Improve teaching
5. Achieve increased efficiencies and effectiveness in the education system through restructuring the governance and delivery of education
6. Ensure that all school boards and schools are adequately and equitably funded
7. Manage Alberta Education effectively and efficiently to achieve department and government goals
8. Ensure that the cost of education is reasonable and under control
9. Ensure that the education system is open and accountable

Results

1. Alberta's learning standards meet the expectations of Albertans
   - Students, teachers and parents know what is expected of Alberta students
   - Students achieve the standards in the provincial curriculum
   - Students receive the education they need to prepare them for entry into the workplace and post-secondary studies
   - Alberta students perform favourably compared to students outside the province
2. Parents have opportunities to choose schools and/or programs for their children within the public education system
   - Parents, business and the community have meaningful roles in education
3. Students with special needs have access to the services they require
4. Teacher preparation and professional growth focus on the competencies needed to help students learn
   - Teachers use a variety of appropriate strategies to help improve student learning
   - Teachers help students achieve learning expectations and high standards
5. School jurisdictions and schools are efficient in their use of resources
   - School jurisdictions and schools are effective in providing students with opportunities for success
6. All students have equitable educational opportunities
7. Department operations reduced and focused directly on the business plan for education and the department's mission, mandate and core functions
   - Department productivity is increased
8. The cost of delivering education meets government target
9. Albertans have timely and meaningful information about student achievement, and the performance and cost of education at the provincial, school jurisdiction and school levels
   - School authorities systematically use performance measure results to improve education

Selected Strategies

1. Clear learning outcomes and high standards for basic education
   - Assessment materials for classroom use, grades 1-12, based on provincial standards in core subjects
   - Material for parents on provincial achievement standards
   - Flexible assessment strategies to better accommodate year-round schooling
   - Career and Technology Studies involving business
   - With other provinces, common standards in core subjects
2. School Councils enable parents and teachers to have a meaningful role in decisions
   - Focus on student conduct and conflict resolution to prevent violence in schools
   - Continue to implement Charter Schools
3. In cooperation with other departments and agencies remove barriers to coordination of services for children with special needs
4. Establish competencies for teachers
   - Update teacher preparation, certification and evaluation requirements
5. Implement school-based decision-making
   - Regional consortia coordinate inservice, training and professional development resources
   - Increase access and efficiency through technology
6. Continue phase-in of uniform mill rates for education
   - New capital plan for funding school building projects (modernizations and new schools)
   - 400-hour ECS program
7. Restructure operations of the department
   - Regulatory Reform Plan
8. Meet government spending targets
   - 1997 provincial education mill rates at or below 1993 rates
   - Limit school board spending on administration through the funding framework
9. Performance measures identify progress and improvements needed
   - Provincial and local education plans and annual results reports

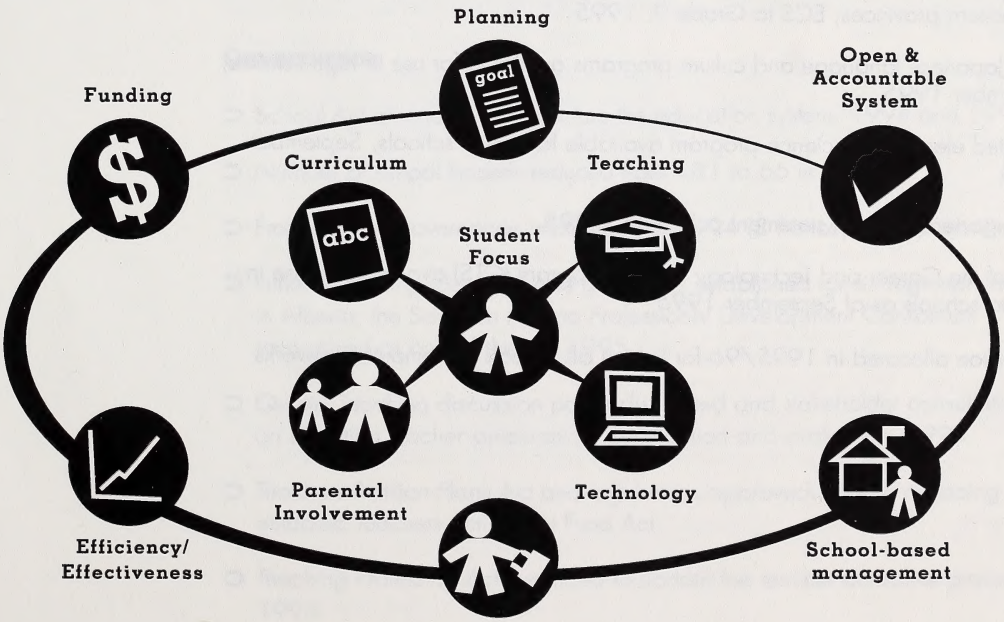
Improving Education in Alberta

High standards for education are a top priority of the Alberta Government. We must use our resources wisely to improve education and to ensure that our young people are well prepared for the future. Over the last two years we have significantly restructured the education system to enhance quality while reducing administrative costs, funding schools more equitably and providing for more parent and community involvement. *Meeting the Challenge III* builds on that progress as we work to complete restructuring and continue to fulfill our *mission, "the best possible education for all Alberta students"* at an affordable cost.

By reducing the number of school boards, limiting administrative spending and increasing efficiency, the province has made available more money for student learning. In 1996/97 spending on Early Childhood Services, technology upgrading for schools, and capital funding for new school construction and modernization is increasing to respond to the priorities of Albertans. The $27.74 spent per student per school day represents good value for the tax dollars of Albertans.

Meeting the Challenge III advances our province's commitment to providing quality education for all students and to strong financial management, demonstrating Alberta's continued leadership in education. The plan focuses on students while continuing to encourage greater parental and community involvement, increase openness and accountability and ensure fairness in funding and taxation.

Alberta's Education System, ECS to Grade 12



Progress and Accomplishments 1994/95 - 1995/96

Meeting the Challenge, the business plan for education, was first published in February 1994. It was updated and extended to 1997/98 in February 1995. It set out nine goals to improve student learning, the delivery of education and the cost-effectiveness of the education system through restructuring. Major progress has been made in key areas in the first two years of the plan with the help of five MLA Implementation Teams and our education partners. Listed below are the key accomplishments over the past two years.

Student Learning and Achievement

- Expanded the achievement testing program to include assessing students' reading, writing and math skills in Grade 3 each year and assessing Grade 6 and Grade 9 students in all four core subjects each year, starting June 1995
- Provision made for local marking of provincial achievement tests for year-end student assessment, June 1995
- New diploma examination programs in Science 30, Social Studies 33 and Mathematics 33 developed, with first administration in January 1996
- Published policy on use and reporting of results on provincial assessments and information package for parents on provincial standards and achievement tests
- Lead province in the development of the common math curriculum framework for the western provinces, ECS to Grade 9, 1995
- New Japanese language and culture programs available for use in high schools, September 1995
- Updated elementary science program available for use in schools, September 1995
- Kindergarten program statement published, 1995
- 90% of the Career and Technology Studies program (CTS) available for use in Alberta schools as of September 1995
- $5 million allocated in 1995/96 for linking all schools to computer networks

Enhanced Choice and Parental/Community Involvement in Education

- Charter Schools Handbook and Regulations published, 1995
- Five Charter Schools approved; three schools began operating in September 1995
- School Council Regulation, Handbook and Resource Manual published, 1995
- New School Councils under way
- Full provincial funding, with funding following the student, enables students to attend any public or separate school of their choice, as long as space is available

Children with Special Needs

- Action Plan developed in consultation with other departments and the Commissioner of Children's Services, 1994
- Guide to Education for Students with Special Needs distributed, 1995
- Five pilot projects on Coordination of Services for Children with Special Needs concluded; two are continuing as part of the initiatives of the Commissioner of Children's Services

Governance

- School Act amended to restructure the education system, 1994 and 1995
- Number of school boards reduced from 181 to 66 in 1995
- Francophone governance implemented, 1994 (3 francophone authorities)
- Initiative funding identified and guidelines established for six regional consortia in Alberta; the Southern Alberta Professional Development Consortium recognized as one of the six, 1995
- Quality Teaching discussion paper distributed and stakeholder consultations held on updating teacher preparation, certification and evaluation, 1995
- Teachers Pension Plans Act and regulations approved, 1995, replacing the outdated Teachers Retirement Fund Act
- Teaching Profession Act amended to update the teacher discipline process, 1995

Fair Funding and Cost Control

- Full provincial funding of education (operating and capital), 1994/95
- New Funding Framework, allocating funds for instruction on an equitable basis and limiting school board administrative spending, implemented 1995/96 school year
- Began phasing in uniform mill rates for education in the 1995 tax year
- Education budget targets met, 1994 and 1995
- Provincial average equalized basic mill rate reduced from 7.64 in 1993 to 7.30 mills in 1995
- Court upheld the major initiatives of the education restructuring plan and affirmed the fairness and equity of the new funding structures

Alberta Education Streamlined and Focused on the Business Plan

- Alberta Education operating budget reduced 13.3% and staff reduced 19.6% from 1992/93 through 1995/96
- Regional Offices in Lethbridge, Red Deer and Grande Prairie closed; Regional Offices consolidated in Edmonton and Calgary, 1994-1995
- Materials Resource Centre (MRC) in Calgary closed; Edmonton MRC streamlined, 1994
- Performance Management System in place; employee Productivity Plans linked to business plan, 1995
- New management job evaluation plan developed for implementation government wide; Alberta Education was one of two provincial departments involved in a pilot to redefine public service management positions
- Fees introduced for high school transcripts and for rewriting diploma exams; fees increased for teaching certificates, 1995
- Electronic transfer of all student enrollment information and about half the high school course and mark information from school jurisdictions to Alberta Education implemented, 1995
- Operation of the Alberta School for the Deaf transferred to the Edmonton Public School Board, 1995/96 school year
- Updated Policies, Regulations and Forms Manual published, consolidating and streamlining three previous documents used throughout the education system, 1995
- Regulations reduced 21% from 1992 to 1995

Accountability Enhanced

- Accountability Policy Framework Paper outlining school board planning and reporting requirements published, 1995
- Guides to school board interim education plans and school board annual education reports published, 1995
- Guidelines distributed for provincial approval of superintendents' appointments, 1995
- Alberta Education's Results Report on business plan performance measures published, September 1995
- School Board and Accredited Private School Interim Education Plans aligned with the provincial business plan for education and Annual Education Reports including specified information, Fall 1995
- Management review of Department conducted, 1995/96
- Alberta School Foundation Fund Review Board established, 1995
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Program for Alberta Education implemented, 1995

Education Performance Highlights

Alberta Education collected and analyzed data on all the performance measures in the provincial business plan for education. The results achieved in the first year of the business plan were published in the *Results Report on the Three-Year Plan for Education, ECS to Grade 12*, 1995.

A review of these results, summarized below, identified 17 high performance areas, where targets or standards were substantially met, and 15 areas needing improvement. Priorities for improvement for the education system were developed from these improvement areas. Actions to address these priorities for improvement are included in the Goals and Strategies section of this plan.

High Performance Areas

- More than 75% of students writing Grade 12 examinations met or exceeded the acceptable assessment standard
- Alberta 13 and 16 year olds performed as well as or better than students across Canada in reading/writing and mathematics
- Most parents surveyed are satisfied with the quality of education, the management of their child's school and information on their child's achievement
- Most high school students surveyed are satisfied with their education and support from school staff

- Most parents of children with severe special needs surveyed are satisfied overall with services provided, and with their effectiveness and relevance
- The gap between school jurisdictions with the highest and lowest expenditures per student has decreased significantly
- Spending on education is under control

Improvement Areas

- Based on the most recent data available, 70% of students had completed high school within six years of beginning Grade 9
- While Alberta students scored at least as well as students across Canada in math problem solving, both the Canadian and the Alberta results were unacceptably low
- Slightly more than half of the parents of children with severe special needs who were surveyed were satisfied with accessibility and efficiency of services
- Of those surveyed, about half the parents and fewer than half of the public felt that learning expectations of students are about right
- Close to half of the parents and public who were surveyed were satisfied with information about how money is spent at the school board level; satisfaction rates were higher for parents on the same question for school level spending
- Of those surveyed half of the public were satisfied that they were receiving value for the money spent in their local school; parent satisfaction on this question was much higher (73%)
- While all high schools offer sufficient courses to ensure students can obtain the credits required for a diploma, small schools provide far fewer complementary courses than larger schools
- Slightly more than half of the public, parents, employers and teachers surveyed were satisfied with the opportunity to be involved in school board level decision making

Priorities for Improvement

- Increasing school completion rates of high school students
- Improving students' mathematics problem solving skills
- Improving coordination of services for students with special needs
- Ensuring good information is accessible to parents and the public on standards, student achievement and cost of the education system

- Ensuring that resources are directed to instruction to help students succeed, including expanded use of instructional technology

- Ensuring opportunities for parental and community involvement in education

These priorities for improvement and other information provided by the performance measures were used in developing *Meeting the Challenge III*. Strategies have been added or updated to address the areas where better results are required. Other strategies have been continued to ensure that high performance levels are maintained.

For more information on education's performance measures, see *Results Report on the Three-Year Plan for Education, ECS to Grade 12, 1995* available from the Policy and Planning Branch, Alberta Education, 427-8217 or on the Internet at Alberta Education's home page (http://ednet.edc.gov.ab.ca).

Vision for Education: A Foundation for Our Children's Future

All Alberta students will have access to a solid core program and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to be self-reliant, responsible, caring and contributing members of society.

Meeting the needs of students in a rapidly changing world

Social, economic, and technological changes in our society are happening more frequently, and more rapidly than ever thought possible. Our education system will make continuous improvements to ensure that Alberta students are well prepared for the twenty-first century.

Quality programs and high standards for all students

Students will know clearly what they are expected to learn. Schools will achieve excellence by setting high standards and expectations, and by encouraging students to develop high expectations for themselves and to take responsibility for their learning. Increased testing and improved reporting will ensure that students, teachers, parents and other Albertans know and understand what our young people have achieved and what they still need to learn.

Students come first!

The efforts of the entire education system will focus on providing all students with equitable opportunities, regardless of their family income, where they live in Alberta, or whether they have special needs.

Help students be the best they can be

All students will have access to education programs that develop individual potential and prepare them for daily living and the challenges of the world of work and lifelong learning.

Students will have a solid knowledge of the language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies; and an appreciation for our history, our literature and arts, and the cultures that make up our country. They will be able to solve problems, to cope with uncertainty, and to find opportunities in change.

Education is everybody's business

All Albertans - students, parents, the community, teachers, principals, trustees, superintendents, business and government - share the responsibility to provide all Alberta students with the best possible education.

Parents and communities will help schools decide how to use available resources to enable students to learn and meet provincial standards. Boards will ensure that the focus of all spending is on supporting and improving student learning.

Teachers play a vital role

Schools and teachers will demonstrate that students are learning. Teachers will continue to be well-prepared to help students meet performance standards and attain learning expectations. They have the freedom to teach, and the desire to continue to develop new skills, share in leadership and decision-making, and support other teachers.

Opportunities for choice

There will continue to be a diverse range of programs and schools to serve students from different backgrounds and to support community values. Parents and students will have greater opportunity to select schools and programs.

Excellent, affordable education

Albertans will receive full value for their education tax dollars. All levels of the education system - provincial, school jurisdiction and school - will operate efficiently and keep administrative costs under control to ensure that more education dollars are directed to the classroom. The province will have a quality education system at a cost Albertans can afford.

Accountable to Albertans

Albertans have the information they need to know that the province has a solid education system, that progress has been made with available resources, and that improvements are under way.

Mission, Mandate, Principles and Beliefs

Mission

"The Best Possible Education For All Alberta Students."

Mandate

Education is responsible for ensuring that all students have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to be self-reliant, responsible, caring and contributing members of society.

Principles

- *Access to quality education:* Every student in Alberta has the right of access to a quality basic education which is consistent with the student's abilities and provides the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to fulfill personal goals and contribute to society as a whole.
- *Equity:* All students in Alberta will have access to a quality basic education regardless of where they live.
- *Flexibility:* Within standards and policies set by the provincial government, there will be opportunities for choice in the public education system. School boards, schools and individual teachers have flexibility to meet the unique needs of the students and communities they serve.
- *Responsiveness:* The student is the focus of all activities in the education system; legislation, policies and practices must respond to the needs of students.
- *Accountability:* All those involved in making decisions about educational matters, including the allocation of public funds for education, must be accountable for their decisions and choices. This includes the Minister of Education, school boards and their staff, parents, as well as students.

Beliefs

- All students can learn and experience success
- All students have the right of equitable access to a quality basic education program that meets their diverse needs
- Students are responsible for participating fully in the achievement of their educational success
- All students must have strong reading, writing and math skills with which to analyze data and develop ideas and inferences
- Students are entitled to a safe, secure and caring learning environment where each individual is respected and valued
- Education is an essential building block of our society's future
- The education system must provide our society with creative and critical thinkers and problem solvers, who are prepared for the world of work, post-secondary studies, life-long learning and citizenship in a complex world
- The education system must provide opportunities for students to acquire the entrepreneurial and technical skills and work habits required for success in the rapidly changing, high-tech global economy
- Quality educational programs develop the total person - social, physical, intellectual, cultural and emotional dimensions
- High learning expectations challenge all students to learn and achieve
- The success of students is the shared responsibility of students, parents, school, community, and government
- Parents should have opportunities for meaningful involvement in important decisions about their children's education
- Parents and the public should have access to timely information about the performance and cost of the education system
- The satisfaction of students, parents and the public is critical to the success of the education system
- Resources and relevant decision making should be located where education happens
- All those responsible for decisions about education, including the expenditure of education funds, are accountable to Albertans for actions and results
- Available resources can maintain and improve the quality of education for students if managed efficiently and innovatively
- The provision of educational funding must be fair, adequate, and affordable

Basic Education in Alberta - the Definition

The school's first obligation is to provide a solid core program consisting of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

Schools have the responsibility to provide instructional programs that ensure students will meet the provincial graduation requirements and are prepared for entry into the workplace or post-secondary studies. As well, schools must ensure that students understand the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and have the skills and disposition to pursue learning throughout their lives.

Learning Expectations

Schools will be accountable for their students' achievement of provincial learning standards including employability skills consistent with workplace requirements.

Schools will provide a variety of learning experiences so that students:

- Can read for information, understanding and enjoyment
- Write and speak clearly, accurately and appropriately for the context
- Use mathematics to solve problems in business, science and daily-life situations
- Understand the physical world, ecology and the diversity of life
- Understand the scientific method and the societal context of science
- Know the history and geography of Canada and have a general understanding of world history and geography
- Understand Canada's political, social, and economic systems within a global context
- Can research an issue thoroughly
- Know how to work independently and as part of a team
- Respect the cultural diversity of Canada and appreciate literature and the arts
- Know the basic requirements of an active, healthful lifestyle
- Recognize the importance of accepting responsibility for their physical and emotional well-being and appreciate the role of the family and other relationships in that well-being
- Manage time and other resources needed to complete a task
- Use computer and communication technologies
- Demonstrate initiative, leadership, flexibility, and persistence
- Evaluate their own endeavors and continually strive to improve
- Have the desire and realize the need for life-long learning

Schools also may provide the opportunity for students to acquire a second language. When the primary language of instruction is not English, students must be able to demonstrate competence in reading and writing English.

Education Delivery

Schools must engage students in a variety of activities that enable them to acquire the expected learnings. Many students will require concrete, hands-on approaches to achieve the expected results. Schools will have authority to deploy resources and may use any instructional technique acceptable to the community as long as the results are achieved. Schools and teachers are encouraged to take advantage of different delivery options such as distance education and workplace learning.

Senior high school students will be able to learn employability skills in the workplace. The school will provide support to ensure a broad theoretical understanding of those specific skills. The province will provide high school credit for workplace learning that is certified by the school and by the employer. This will ensure that students have the skills demanded by business and gain recognized work experience to assist in making the transition from school to work.

Wherever possible, school programs and credit granting procedures will be redesigned to ensure compatibility with post-secondary and occupational training programs, thus improving the efficiency of the entire system by removing duplication.

Standards for Student Learning

The province will define acceptable standards and standards of excellence for student achievement. Business will be a key player in defining the specific learning requirements of industry. Schools, school jurisdictions and the province will assess and report on the full range of student learning.

The school's primary responsibility is to ensure that students meet or exceed the provincial standards, as reflected in student learning expectations, provincial achievement tests, diploma examinations and graduation requirements.

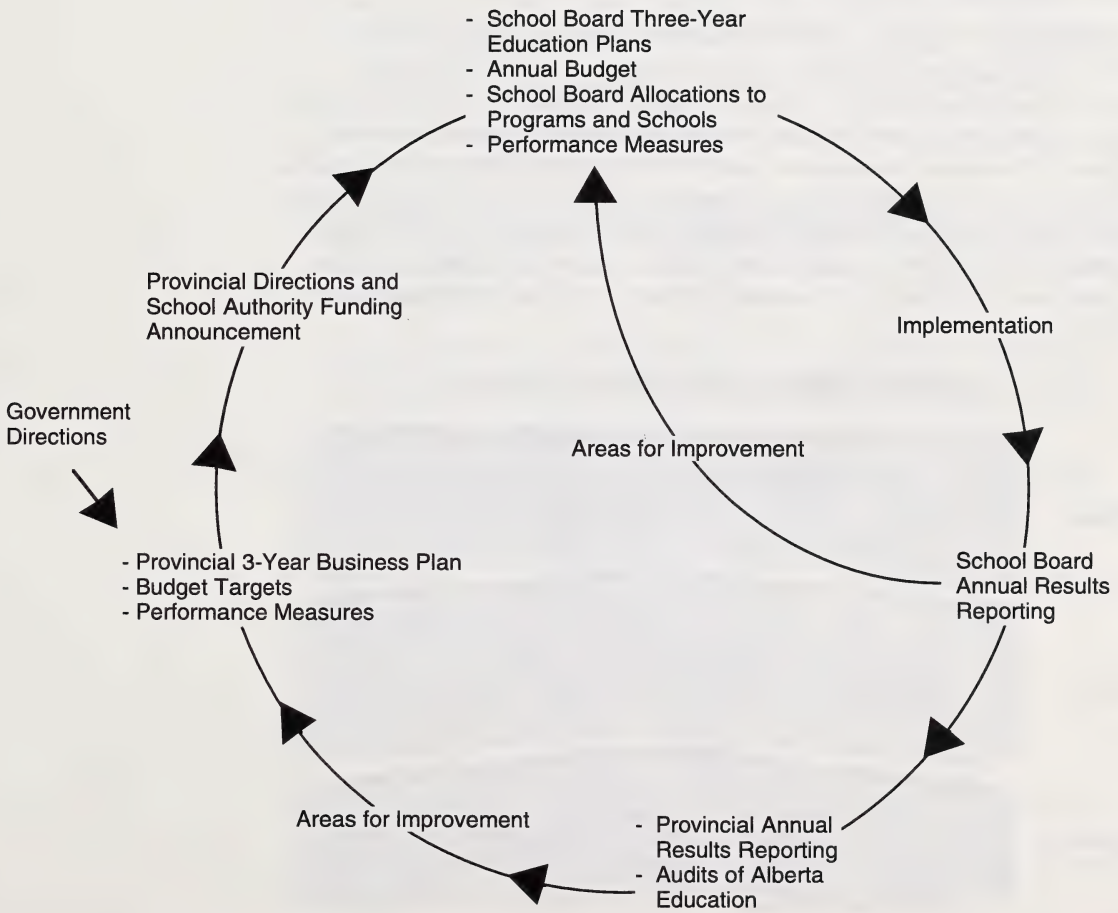
Core Business of Alberta Education

Alberta Education carries out the provincial government's constitutional responsibility for education under the direction of the Minister. The department:

- ensures that high standards are established and communicated, focusing on what students need to learn
- develops and implements legislation, policies and long-range plans for the education system
- provides funding to school authorities (school boards and accredited private schools) on a fair and equitable basis and controls the cost of education
- assesses and reports to government and the public on student achievement and the performance and cost of the education system

The Accountability Cycle for the education system is a key mechanism for carrying out these responsibilities. The provincial government and school authorities establish directions and budgets, implement plans and assess progress in order to make continuous improvements and report publicly on results. These interlinked activities ensure consistency with provincial directions, provide for school authority feedback into provincial planning for education and enhance accountability throughout Alberta's education system.

Accountability Cycle for Education


- School Board Three-Year Education Plans
- Annual Budget
- School Board Allocations to Programs and Schools
- Performance Measures
Implementation
School Board Annual Results Reporting
- Provincial Annual Results Reporting
- Audits of Alberta Education
Areas for Improvement
- Provincial 3-Year Business Plan
- Budget Targets
- Performance Measures
Government Directions
Provincial Directions and School Authority Funding Announcement
Areas for Improvement

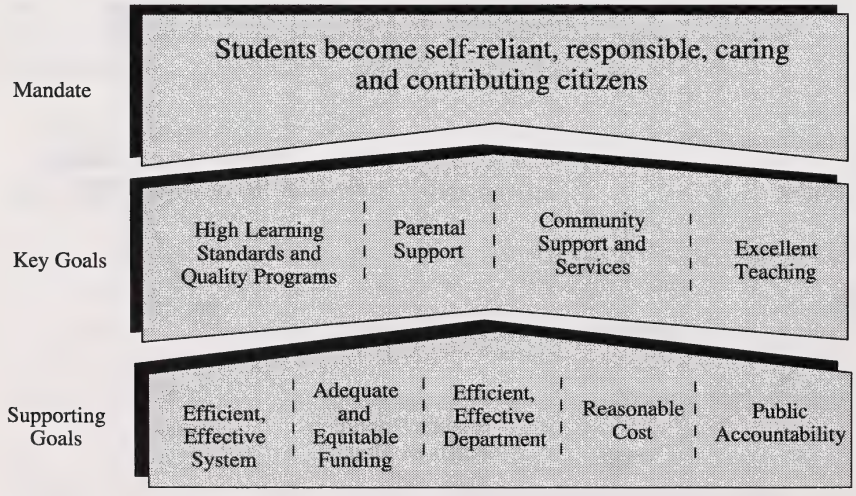
Overview of Education Goals

Education's mandate is to ensure that students have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to be self-reliant, responsible, caring and contributing members of society. The nine goals in the business plan help to accomplish this by improving all aspects of the education system. The overall purpose of the plan is to improve student learning.

Four of the nine goals are key to achieving education's mandate and directly support student learning. The ability of students to meet high standards depends on many things, including how well teachers, students and parents understand learning expectations and work toward achieving them. The efforts of parents, teachers and the community are important to improving student learning, as is the increased coordination of community services for children.

The remaining five goals support the achievement of the four key goals. They address equitable funding, administrative efficiency and public accountability. Equitable funding ensures that all students have a fair share of resources to support the quality of programs and services they require to meet their individual needs. Efficient and effective administration, both at the provincial and local levels, ensures that more of the available funds are directed toward instruction and keeps spending under control. Public accountability provides an incentive for educators and their partners to use performance information to chart progress and to make on-going improvements to all levels of the education system - province, school boards and schools.

Goals for Achieving Education's Mandate



Note: Provincial performance measures are used to report annually to Albertans on student achievement and the performance and cost of the education system.

Key Goals and Strategies

Goal 1: Focus education on what students need to learn; ensure that high standards are established, communicated and achieved.

Strategies

1.1 Establish and communicate clear learning outcomes and high standards for basic education.

1.2 Complete assessment materials for teachers' use to enhance communication of provincial standards.

1.3 Complete curriculum in Career and Technology Studies by 1996/97, involving business in the development and delivery of some skills programs.

1.4 Provide information for parents on what students are expected to learn.

1.5 Increase availability of diploma examinations to accommodate more effectively students' examination needs.

1.6 Continue annual provincial achievement tests and reporting in core subjects, testing Grade 3 students in reading/writing and math knowledge/problem solving and Grades 6 and 9 students in these subjects as well as in science and social studies.

1.7 Through diploma examination programs in Math 33, Social Studies 33 and English 33, provide clear and consistent standards for and recognize the achievement of students who plan to enter the workforce or selected post-secondary programs.

1.8 Reduce duplication and repetition in curriculum development within Alberta, and streamline the curriculum development process.

1.9 Continue to provide opportunities for teachers to mark their students' provincial achievement tests and to use the results in end-of-year assessment of students.

1.10 In cooperation with other provinces, work to establish common standards in core subjects.

Goal 2: Provide parents with greater opportunity to select schools and programs of their choice and enable greater parent/community involvement in education.

Strategies

2.1 Enable parents and teachers to have a meaningful role in decisions about policies, programs, budgets and activities in their schools.

2.2 Act on the business involvement recommendations of the MLA Implementation Team.

2.3 Continue to enable students to attend public schools of choice within or outside their school jurisdictions.

2.4 Continue to implement charter schools and monitor their effectiveness.

2.5 Work with education partners on improving student conduct to ensure safe, secure schools.

Goal 3: Improve the coordination of services for children with special needs.

Strategies

3.1 In cooperation with other departments and agencies, assist school jurisdictions and schools to develop community service plans that support the learning of students with special needs.

3.2 In cooperation with other departments and community agencies, remove barriers to coordination of services for children with special needs to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

3.3 Work with other provincial departments to meet the health and related support needs of students.

Goal 4: Improve Teaching.

Strategies

4.1 Establish competencies for beginning and experienced teachers.

4.2 Update teacher preparation, certification and evaluation requirements.

4.3 Improve the link of teacher professional development with teacher supervision and evaluation.

Supporting Goals and Strategies

Goal 5: Achieve increased efficiencies and effectiveness in the education system through restructuring the governance and delivery of education.

Strategies

5.1 Implement school-based decision making.

5.2 Establish regional consortia to coordinate resources for the implementation of school councils, school - based decision making and for staff development.

5.3 Achieve cost reductions through joint planning and delivery of programs and services among school jurisdictions and other local agencies.

5.4 Reduce the duplication between secondary and post-secondary institutions and programs.

5.5 Increase access, expand program choice, and improve efficiency through technology, telecommunications, and off-campus instruction.

5.6 Act on the technology integration recommendations of the MLA Implementation Team.

5.7 Monitor the establishment and effectiveness of school councils.

Goal 6: Ensure that all school boards and schools are adequately and equitably funded.

Strategies

6.1 Monitor the effects of the Funding Framework and make adjustments as needed.

6.2 Complete phase in of uniform mill rates for education in most municipalities, by the 1997 tax year.

6.3 Implement a new capital plan for funding school construction and modernization.

6.4 Provide funding for a 400-hour Early Childhood Services program, including transportation.

Goal 7: Manage Alberta Education effectively and efficiently to achieve department and government goals.

Strategies

7.1 Achieve efficiencies in budget preparation, curriculum development, purchasing and data systems.

7.2 Increase cost recovery on selected department services.

7.3 Restructure or privatize operations of the department as appropriate.

7.4 Increase the use of technology to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of department operations.

7.5 Act on recommendations from the external assessment of the department's performance.

7.6 Implement government's plan for review of education regulations.

Goal 8: Ensure that the cost of education is reasonable and under control.

Strategies

8.1 Meet the spending targets established by government.

8.2 Ensure that 1997 provincial education mill rates are at or below the 1993 weighted average.

8.3 Continue to limit school board spending on administration through the Funding Framework.

Goal 9: Ensure that the education system is open and accountable.

Strategies

9.1 Use provincial performance measures to assess and report regularly to the public on student learning and achievement and on the performance and cost of Alberta's education system, and to develop actions to improve education.

9.2 Conduct reviews or audits as needed and make the results public.

9.3 Require school authorities to develop and implement three-year education plans and publish annual results reports that meet provincial and local requirements, starting with the 1996/97 school year.

9.4 Assess school authority education plans and results reports annually for consistency with government directions for education and to identify opportunities for improving education.

9.5 Continue to implement Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy program for Alberta Education.

The three-year business plan for education maintains high standards for student learning throughout the province while meeting the spending targets of government through strong financial management. This reflects the priority of Albertans for a quality education system at an affordable cost. The restructuring of the education system has focused resources equitably on student instruction and reduced administrative costs significantly.

Fiscal Year	1995/96 Budget	1996/97 Target (in $ millions)	1997/98 Target	1998/99 Target
Public and Separate School Board funding, including ECS[1]	$2,733	$2,750	$2,808	$2,814
Private Schools and Private ECS	$45	$50	$52	$53
Department Operations	$49	$46	$44	$39
Other[2]	$18	$17	$17	$17
Total Spending on Education	$2,845	$2,863	$2,921	$2,923
Less opted-out School Boards	($140)	($164)	($165)	($168)
Total Ministry Spending	$2,705	$2,699	$2,756	$2,755

1 includes opted-out school boards, contributions to the Teachers' Retirement Fund, and the Learning Resources Distributing Centre (LRDC) and Material Resource Centre (MRC) subsidies

2 includes LRDC revolving fund and Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Reinvestment Initiatives

The Alberta government will provide additional funds for education over the next three years. While funding for education will increase $78 million over the three years, funds available for public and separate school boards will increase $81 million (3%) overall from 1995/96 to 1998/99. These school board funding increases include enrollment growth and the following reinvestment initiatives:

Early Childhood Services - Full provincial funding will be provided for 400 hours of ECS, including transportation. Instructional fees will be eliminated.

Technology Upgrading for Schools - The Alberta government recognizes the importance of integrating technology into the education program. Some $40

million will be provided over the plan period to upgrade and expand the educational technology available to students. This is in addition to the $5 million allocated in 1995/96 to provide computer network access for all schools by 1996/97.

Capital Funding - The provincial government will provide $354 million over the next three years to maintain and upgrade existing schools and to build new schools where they are needed.

Tax Reform and Reduction

The introduction to full provincial funding in 1994 allowed the Alberta government to implement a tax equity policy. Property tax rates for education had varied widely across the province depending on the assessment base in each school jurisdiction. A phase-in process began in 1995 to bring tax rates for education in each municipality to provincial uniform rates.

In the 1995 tax year uniform tax rates in 106 municipalities, representing 68% of Alberta's population, were implemented. Of the province's 381 municipalities, 353 (92%) will have uniform mill rates for education by 1997. Phasing in uniform rates over several years minimizes the impact on tax payers in municipalities where tax rates were well below the provincial average.

Full provincial funding has enabled government to reduce the provincial average mill rates for education while providing the resources necessary for quality education programs for all our students. In 1993 the provincial average net mill rate for education was 7.64 mills for residential property and 11.02 for non-residential property. These rates have decreased each year since 1993 and are set at 7.12 for residential and 10.44 for non-residential property in 1996.

Strong Financial Management

Several features are key to the Alberta government's strong financial management of education resources. These are reflected in Agenda '96, the Funding Framework, the School Capital Plan and the Alberta School Foundation Fund (ASFF) as well as the three-year business plan for education.

- School board spending on administration is limited to ensure maximum funding is directed to instruction. Holding the line on funding for transportation and for operations and maintenance ensures that efficiencies are achieved.

- School capital projects are now funded on a cash basis rather than by debenture. This eliminates interest payments on long-term debt, reducing costs and indebtedness. Funding for the construction of new schools is provided only after alternatives for accommodating students have been ruled out.

- All revenues for education from the property tax base flow into the Alberta School Foundation Fund and are used only to provide funding to school boards on a per-student basis. There is a public review board to ensure that all monies in the ASFF are allocated to school boards.

- Provincial phase in of uniform tax rates for education and the Funding Framework apply to separate school boards that have opted out of the ASFF.

- The operations of Alberta Education continue to be reduced and restructured to achieve efficiencies to focus on our core business. By 1998/99 the department's operating budget will be reduced 32% ($17 million) and staff will be reduced 31% (214 positions) from 1992/93.

Through the strong financial management of the education system, tax rates for education have been reduced, funding for quality education for all students has been allocated equitably, and additional funding has been provided for Early Childhood Services, technology in schools and school capital projects. Provincial resources for education have stabilized and are more secure now that the provincial deficit has been eliminated and the debt has been reduced. Alberta is well positioned to continue to provide quality education for our young people now and in the future.

Key Goals: Results and Measures

Goal 1: Focus education on what students need to learn; ensure that high standards are established, communicated and achieved.

Results

- Alberta's learning standards meet the expectations of Albertans.
- Students, teachers and parents know what is expected of Alberta students.
- Students achieve provincial learning standards.
- Students receive the education they need to prepare them for entry into the workplace and post-secondary studies.
- Alberta students perform favorably compared to students outside the province.

Measures

1.1 Percentage of Albertans who are satisfied that the curriculum focuses on what students need to learn and learning standards are high enough

1.2 Percentage of employers and post-secondary institutions satisfied with Alberta's high school graduation requirements

1.3 Percentage of students, teachers and parents who know what Alberta students are expected to learn

1.4 Percentage of students who receive a high school diploma or certificate, or enter post-secondary studies within 6 years of entering grade 9

1.5 Percentage of students who achieve an acceptable standard or standard of excellence on provincial achievement tests and diploma examinations

1.6 Percentage of students, parents, employers, post-secondary instructors and the public who are satisfied with the preparation of students for the workplace or post-secondary education

1.7 Performance of Alberta students in achieving national and international standards compared with students outside of Alberta

1.8 Percentage of parents who are satisfied with the quality of their children's education

Goal 2: Provide parents with greater opportunity to select schools and programs of their choice and enable greater parent/community involvement in education.

Results

- Parents have opportunities to choose schools and/or programs for their children within the public education system.
- Parents, business and the community have meaningful roles in education.

Measures

2.1 Percentage of parents who are satisfied with their opportunity to choose schools and programs for their children within the public education system

2.2 Extent and nature of business and community involvement in school system and school programs, services and activities

2.3 Percentage of parents, teachers, business and community representatives who are satisfied with their role in decision making

Goal 3: Improve the coordination of services for children with special needs.

Results

- Students with special needs have access to the services they require.

Measures

3.1 Percentage of parents of children with special needs who are satisfied with the accessibility, effectiveness, relevance and efficiency of services for their children

3.2 Percentage of school authorities implementing, or with procedures for implementing, community service plans for children with special needs

Goal 4: Improve Teaching.

Results

- Teacher preparation and professional growth focus on the competencies needed to help students learn.
- Teachers use a variety of appropriate strategies to help improve student learning.
- Teachers help students achieve learning expectations and high standards.

Measures

4.1 Percentage of beginning teachers and their principals who report that teacher preparation adequately prepares beginning teachers to:

- provide instruction competently to students
- teach approved courses of study
- promote approved goals and standards
- encourage and foster student learning
- regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the students, the students' parents and the board
- maintain, under the direction of the principal, student order and discipline

4.2 Percentage of parents who are satisfied that teachers:

- have the competencies needed to help students learn
- use strategies that promote student leaning
- provide students with variety and challenge in classroom and school activities
- promote high standards
- help students achieve learning expectations
- clearly communicate and actively support expectations for students' learning, behavior, and involvement at school

Supporting Goals: Results and Measures

Goal 5: Achieve increased efficiencies and effectiveness in the education system through restructuring the governance and delivery of education.

Results

➲ School jurisdictions and schools are efficient in their use of available resources.

➲ School jurisdictions and schools are effective in providing all students with opportunities for success.

Measures

5.1 School jurisdiction spending on instruction and administration as a percentage of total school jurisdiction spending

5.2 Percentage of parents satisfied that their children's school is well run

5.3 Percentage of parents who believe they receive the support needed from their principal and school board for their school council

5.4 Percentage of parents and public satisfied that their school system is well run

5.5 Percentage of students who are satisfied with:
- their school overall
- variety and challenge in classroom and school activities
- opportunities to make decisions about their learning and career paths
- clarity of expectations for their learning, behavior, and involvement at school and
- the help and support they receive from school staff

Goal 6: Ensure that all school boards and schools are adequately and equitably funded.

Results

➲ All students have equitable educational opportunities.

Measures

6.1 Range of education programs and services across the province, including programs and services for students with special needs

6.2 Percentage of parents and students satisfied with the range and quality of programs and services in their school

Goal 7: Manage Alberta Education effectively and efficiently to achieve department and government goals.

Results

➲ Department operations are reduced and focused directly on the business plan for education and the department's mission, mandate and core functions.

➲ Department productivity is increased.

Measures

7.1 Number of Alberta Education staff since 1992/93

7.2 Cost per student of department services since 1992/93

7.3 Alberta Education spending as a percentage of total education spending

Goal 8: Ensure that the cost of education is reasonable and under control.

Results

➲ The cost of delivering education meets government target.

Measures

8.1 Spending per student per school day, from 1992/93

8.2 Interprovincial comparisons of:
- per student expenditures
- per capita expenditures

8.3 Average annual provincial equalized mill rates, from 1993

8.4 Cost of school construction per square metre, from 1992/93

8.5 Percentage of parents and the public who are satisfied with the value received from the public funds spent on education

Goal 9: Ensure that the education system is open and accountable.

Results

➲ Albertans have timely and meaningful information about student achievement, and the performance and cost of education at the provincial, school jurisdiction and school levels.

➲ School authorities systematically use performance measure results to improve education.

Measures

9.1 Percentage of Albertans who are satisfied with access to and the quality of information about the education system's performance and cost from schools, school jurisdictions and the province

9.2 Percentage of parents who are satisfied with their access to and the quality of school information about their children's progress and educational achievement

9.3 Percentage of school authority plans identifying priorities for improvement and results reports identifying progress on improvement areas

Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

The mission of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities is to enhance and promote the opportunity for full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in the life of the province. The Council's role is to ensure the needs of Albertans with disabilities are understood so they can be addressed. The Council consults with provincial and local agencies, businesses and organizations and advises government on matters relating to the status of persons with disabilities. The ten-year mandate of the Council expires on July 1, 1998. This mandate will be reviewed and recommendations made to ensure that public policy continues to promote full and equal participation of persons with disabilities.

For more information on the three-year business plan of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, contact the Council: Suite 250, 11044 - 82 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 0T2; phone (403) 422-1095; fax (403) 422-9691.

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